

III. Washington's Lewis and Clark Story

Imagery, Regional Context, and Suggested Interpretive Topics

When we think of the story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and its relationship to Washington state, distinct impressions and images come to mind.

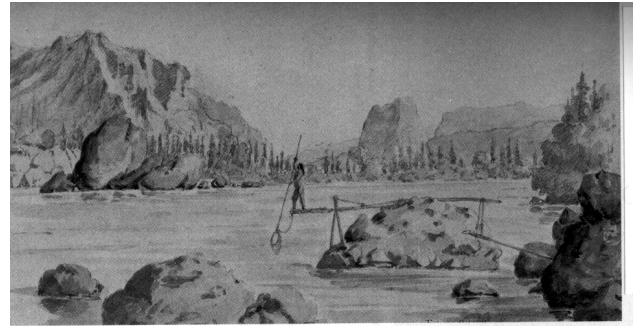
The experiences of the journey come alive in the pages of the journals of Lewis and Clark and other members of the party. Through reading the journals, we are able to visualize the story within its time and place, and we can imagine the experiences of Lewis and Clark as they journeyed down the Snake and Columbia Rivers to the Pacific Ocean in the fall of 1805 and their return in the spring of 1806.

With this statewide effort, we have an incredible opportunity to capture the experiences of the Corps of Discovery through interpretation, creating a broader understanding of the story and its historical significance. Our goal is to create a continuous network of interpretation and orientation information along the Lewis and Clark Trail in Washington. This network of Lewis and Clark interpretive experiences across our state will bring many educational



Basalt Cliffs in the Columbia River Gorge, view from Horsethief Lake State Park

and tourism benefits to our state and to those who come to visit here from other states across the country and other countries throughout the world.



"Indian dip netter at The Cascades," watercolor by Paul Kane, July, 1847

To capture the spirit of discovery, the network of interpretation across Washington must have an identifiable aesthetic (look and feel) that is continuous while also drawing upon the unique regional characteristics described in the journals. Many characteristics described in the journals are still visible today in Washington's diverse landscape.

The imagery related to the Lewis and Clark story can be drawn from both the physical environment and the cultural elements the Corps of Discovery saw and recorded in Washington. Elements of the landscape reflected in the look of Lewis and Clark interpretive elements will help to create a strong regional character, while cultural details will evoke the time and place of the Expedition. The Lewis and Clark interpretive aesthetic will be recognizable and continuous, and it will capture the excitement of exploring the uniqueness of each region, just as the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery did almost 200 years ago.

Please note: All journal excerpts in this chapter are from *The Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition*, Gary E. Moulton, Editor. Spelling and grammar are left just as they are in the journals.

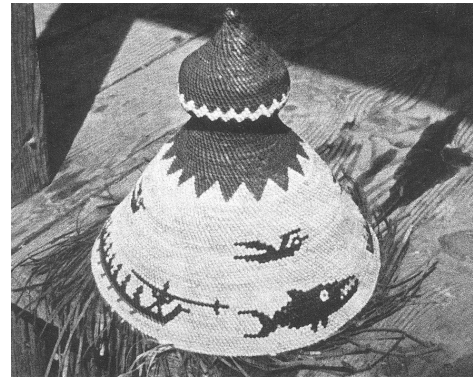
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Elements of Continuity

The iconography of the Corps of Discovery is etched in our cultural imagination. The image of buckskin clad frontiersmen led by two captains, one in a coonskin cap and the other in a military hat, commanding an exploration into the West through a land they had little knowledge of, is an image inherited through romanticized paintings, but also based on some truth. Through the journals, we know of their buckskin clothing, guns, dugout canoes, tools and other things they used, foods they ate, and materials they gathered. We know what they carried, what they traded, what they were given, what new things they saw, and other items so familiar to them at the time. These items have become artifacts inseparable from our image of them. From the stories passed down through the generations, we can begin to understand the perspectives of the people who were here when Lewis and Clark came through the area and aspects of their culture.

The items carried on the journey, as well as the items traded along the way, reflect the history of the era of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, providing visual and thematic clues. Elements of Native American culture the Corps of Discovery encountered, along with the materials and technologies they carried with them, can be distilled from the Lewis and Clark journals and from the stories of tribal descendants, and then interpreted in their context throughout Washington. This approach of context-sensitive interpretation across Washington will establish a sense of continuity throughout the network of interpretive exhibits across the state. Specific images and elements of the Lewis and Clark story that can reinforce this sense of continuity are summarized in more detail in the following text.



Double-coned woven hat

A Visit from a Wahkiakum Chief: *"In the evening a young Chief 4 men and 2 women of the War-ci-a-cum [Wahkiakum] tribe came in a large canoe with Wapto roots, Dressed Elk Skins &c. to Sell, the Chief made me a present of about a half a bushel of those roots — we gave him a medal of a Small Size and a piece of red ribin to tie around the top of his Hat which was made with a double Cone..."* William Clark, December 29, 1805 (It is believed that these visitors were led by Chief Skamokawa of the Wahkiakums, who lived on the north side of the river, just downstream from the present-day location of Skamokawa.)

American Indian Perspectives

The perspectives of the people who were here when the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through this region provide important insight into the story of life before, during, and after the Corps of Discovery. The journals of Lewis and Clark have enlightened our understanding of the journey, yet in some cases, details are sketchy and questions are left unanswered. We can work closely with representatives from the tribes along the trail to help fill in some of these details as part of our interpretation of the story. Accurate interpretation of aspects of Native American culture that existed at the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition will be a critical part of telling the story. We can look to the tribes of each region for information such as:

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- specific stories of the Expedition from Native American perspectives
- styles of houses and structures that existed at the time
- foods they ate, roots and plants they gathered, and herbal medicines they used
- tools and trading goods that were particularly valued
- clothing, including items worn daily and for ceremonial purposes
- interactions with wildlife; hunting and fishing activities
- customs and cultural beliefs
- insights into the life-styles of the tribes prior to contact with Euro-Americans

The Expedition led to events that forever changed the lives and cultures of the Native Americans living in this region. For this reason, representatives from many tribes feel the bicentennial anniversary of the Expedition provides not only an important opportunity to commemorate a significant event in history, but also to tell the story from the American Indian perspective. Many tribes have come forward to share their stories and perspectives related to the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and several tribal representatives have offered to assist with interpretive projects throughout the region. (Refer to the appendix for a list of people to contact.)

Early 1800s Frontier Exploration

In the early 1800s, the western lands were mostly unknown to the Europeans and Euro-Americans of the eastern United States. There was a drive to explore and exploit the West. These frontiersmen carried with them durable clothing, goods, and tools for survival in addition to their own naturalist's knowledge. Imagery used in interpretation related to this era should draw from earth-colored, natural materials, such as:

- rawhide moccasins
- buckskin clothing, (or wet and rotting buckskin near the coast)
- military issued uniforms of the era
- fur trapper clothing of the era
- dugout canoes

Some of the more technologically advanced items carried by explorers, like the air gun, were brought along as oddities, and express uniqueness rather than continuity, but there were some early industrial durable tools and essentials that compliment the “frontiersman” image, such as:

- guns
- axes
- knives
- cooking kettles
- surveying and mapping tools/equipment
- trade goods
- journals

Corps of Discovery

The Corps of Discovery was a military expedition put together by order of President Thomas Jefferson. The Corps had military order and organization under the direction of the captains. The majority of the group were soldiers with rank, duties, and discipline. The military and political images and references are part of the imagery of Lewis and Clark. Some elements to draw upon include:

- military issue items, such as uniforms, guns, and knives
- Jefferson “Peace and Friendship” medals and Washington seasonal medals and military tokens

Jefferson medal found near Wallula; believed to be the one given to Chief Yellepit.



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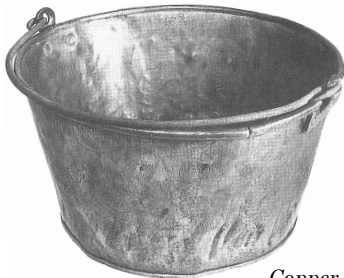
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- the 1803 United States flag

Trade

Trade practices provided a visual indication of the mix of cultures between different Native American tribes, and also between maritime traders and coastal tribes. Some items were almost a currency and a key to the survival of the party. In some cases, these items were given as gifts between the Corps of Discovery and the tribes. These essential items helped to befriend tribes and were used to purchase food, clothing, horses, canoes, and other items desperately needed by the party as they made their way to and from the Pacific Ocean. The trade items provide another important part of the Lewis and Clark story and its related imagery. Certain trade items that provide visual elements of continuity include:

- beads, bells, thimbles, buttons, and ribbons
- axes, knives, and kettles
- dried salmon, roots, horsemeat, berries, and other food
- pelts, baskets, and clothing items



Copper Trade Kettle

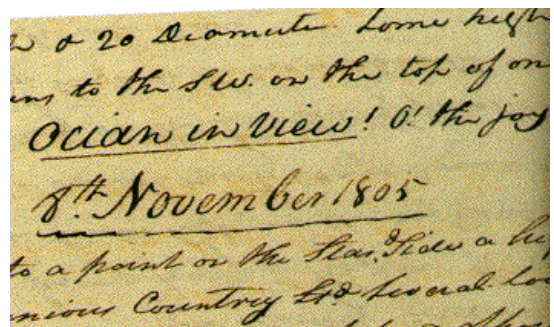
Trading with Chief Yellepit: 'This morning early the Great Chief Yel lip pet brought a very elegant white horse to our camp and presented him to me. Signifying his wish to get a kittle but being informed that we had already disposed of every kittle we could possibly Spare he Said he was Content with what ever I thought proper to give him. I gave him my Sward, 100 balls & powder and Some Small articles of which he appeared perfectly Satisfied...' William Clark, April 28, 1806

- uniforms
- Jefferson "Peace and Friendship" medals and other medals
- firewood

Age of Enlightenment

The period of history around the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition has been called the "Age of Enlightenment," when science and technology were evolving, but mass production and the age of the machine had not yet taken hold. Technological and scientific discovery increased the wonderment of the natural world; a wilderness not to be feared but to be understood, discovered, and exploited for the betterment of humankind. Through this understanding, a romanticism of nature permeated intellectual thought at the time. This enlightened fascination with the natural world and the romantic awe of nature comes through in vivid journal descriptions. Lewis and Clark interpretive imagery can tap into this through:

- journal entries describing physical geography
- journal maps and sketches
- scientific instruments to observe, measure and map, such as the compass and survey instruments



"Ocian in View!" from William Clark's journal, entry dated November 7, 1805

- journal descriptions and detailed sketches of new flora and fauna, as well as collected specimens

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Traveling the Snake and Columbia Rivers and Anticipating the Pacific Ocean

The rivers and water are another visual element of continuity as the Corps of Discovery moved through what is now the State of Washington. On their route toward the Pacific Ocean, there was a sense of anticipation as the Corps moved through a continuous pattern of reoccurring rapids, and stark, open country interspersed with columnar and dark basalt walled canyons. Later, the greater landscape changed around them as they moved through the Columbia River Gorge and into the dense forests of the coastal region. The sense of anticipation with the ocean drawing nearer was a consistent element of the journey. The connection to the rivers, canyons, and water bodies is a strong “binding thread” throughout the state. This connection could be maintained through the proper siting of interpretive elements along these rivers.

Regional Imagery

The Lewis and Clark Expedition saw and described the dramatic change in climate, flora, fauna, and cultures as it passed from the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers, down the Snake River (across today's Southeastern Washington,) then down the



The Snake River

Columbia River through the transitional terrain and climate of the Columbia Gorge, and out through the thick, wet forest, to the Pacific Ocean. The inherent regionalism the Corps of Discovery experienced during this part of their journey remains today in what is now Washington. At the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, this regional identity was even more pronounced. There was not only a variety of natural environments, but also the various Native American tribes along the route, each with its own distinct culture. Through the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, we have a picture of what it was like for the Corps of Discovery as they saw and met these tribes for the first time. Through communications with tribal representatives today, we can learn about their perspectives related to encounters with Lewis and Clark, and we can learn more about what the landscape looked like during that period of time.

Reflecting the natural regional characteristics in interpretive elements along the trail can be done through illustrations of native plants, animals, and materials from each region. Native materials can also be used in the construction of interpretive elements. To experience and enhance the understanding of the Expedition's meeting with the various native cultures at the time, some of the materials and methods of their architecture and craftsmanship could be reflected in the interpretive facilities (refer to Chapter V, “Outdoor Exhibits, Markers, and Other Elements” for ideas).

Key characteristics of the natural environment of the time and the cultures that were present can be drawn from each region. These characteristics are summarized in the following text.

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Snake River region geology



*Indian sweat lodge
on the Columbia
River*



Columnar basalt

Southeastern Washington

Southeastern Washington is typically defined as extending from the southeast side of the Cascade Mountains to the Idaho border. For Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery, the experience of this environment occurred while they were traveling by water from the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers in Clarkston, Washington, to the Columbia River Gorge, as well as when they came overland through this area on their return. The overland return segment that occurred in what is today known as Southeastern Washington was one of the longest extents of the entire journey traveled by land. As Private Whitehouse described in his journal entry of October 10, 1805, “*No timber, barren & broken praries on each Side.*” Some of the key physical characteristics, materials, plants, animals and impressions include:

- *Earth:* Palouse hills, basalt outcrops, river rock
- *Vegetation:* Vast grasslands, sagebrush, prickly pear cactus, some cottonwoods and willow
- *Character:* Open, broad vistas, interspersed with black-walled canyons
- *Climate:* Dry and sunny
- *Colors:* Yellows, golds, and browns in fall and winter, greens in summer, sky blue

- *Animals:* Horses, white-tailed deer, dogs, sage grouse, salmon

This area was located in the western Plateau region, occupied predominantly by Native Americans from the Sahaptian language family; this included principally the Nez Perce (Clark called “Choppunish”) and also the Palouse, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, Warm Springs, Klikitat, Wishram and other tribes. At the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers, the Corps of Discovery met the Wanapums and Yakamas (called the Sokulks and Chimnapums respectively by Clark). Here, a large number of families gathered from several tribes at the height of the fall salmon run. They referred to themselves as the “river people.” Some of the key impressions derived from the cultures of this region include:

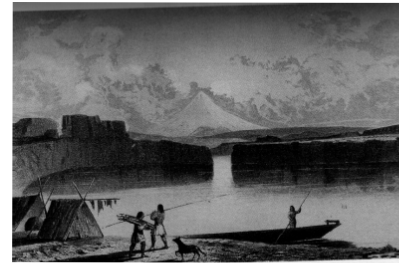
- *Architecture:* Pit houses, sweat lodges, large tule mat long houses, mat covered fishing camp lodges, large scaffolds and timber pole frames for fish drying, and fish weirs; with the scarcity of timber, several tribes carefully collected and stored pieces of wood for use in stabilizing their structures and for picketing graves, but wood plank houses were rare in this region.
- *Clothing and other items:* Elaborate bead work on buckskin; basketry
- *Food:* Camas roots, dried salmon

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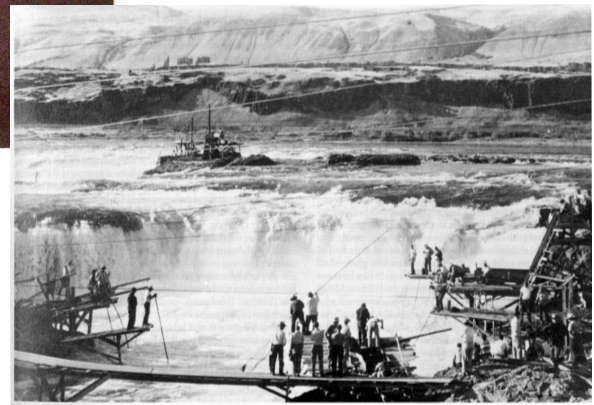
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Spring Creek Fish Hatchery in the Columbia River Gorge — at the transition between drier and wetter climates



"The Dalles," 1853, by John Mix Stanley. Apparently looks downstream from the head of Five Mile Rapids.



Salmon Fishing at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River. Photo courtesy of North Central Washington Museum

Columbia River Gorge

The Columbia River Gorge is a unique and scenic transitional area where the dry lands of the southeastern plateau meet the wet coniferous forests of Washington. Some of the key physical characteristics, materials, plants, animals and impressions of this region include:

- *Earth:* Basalt canyons, rock formations including Beacon Rock
- *Vegetation:* Oregon white oak, California hazelnut, Ponderosa pines
- *Character:* Closed-in, narrower black canyons, shadows, large falls and rapids
- *Climate:* Windy, transitional from dry to wet
- *Colors:* Black canyon walls, browns and greens above
- *Animals:* Salmon, birds, harbor seals

Like the landscape, this region had a transitional cultural character with the Yakama (seasonal), Warm Springs, Klikitat, upper Chinookan Wishram, Wasco, Chilluckittequaw, Skilloot, and other tribes. Some of the key impressions derived from the cultures of this region include:

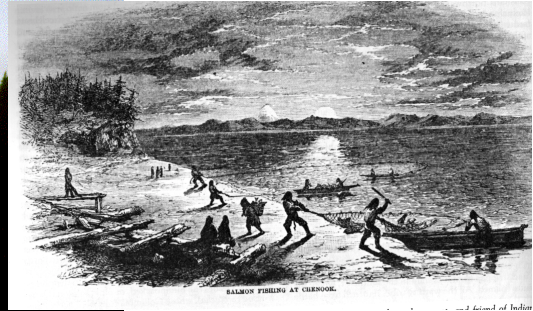
- *Architecture:* Reed/tule mat and pole fish camps, pole lean-to's and drying racks, fishing scaffolding, cedar plank houses
- *Clothing and other items:* Mixed, some influence of maritime trade, shell jewelry, beads, bear grass, and cedar bark baskets
- *Food:* Salmon, filberts, berries, and wappato roots

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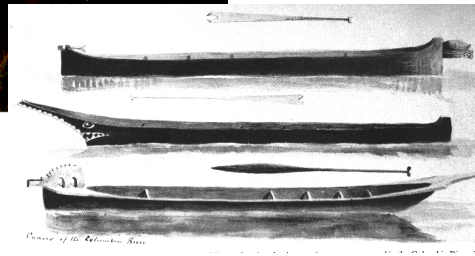
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The Pacific Ocean



"Salmon Fishing at Chenook" painting by James Swan



"Three Canoes and Paddles of the Columbia River" painting by Paul Kane

Southwestern Washington

Southwestern Washington stretches from the Columbia River Gorge through the lower Columbia Valley, to the dense, wet forests and the Pacific Ocean. Some of the key physical characteristics, materials, plants, animals, and impressions of this region include:

- *Earth:* Thickly forested hills, tidal lands, islands, sand beaches
- *Vegetation:* Large, dense coniferous forests with Douglas fir, western red cedar, Sitka spruce, hemlock, vine maple, big leaf maple, black cottonwood, and numerous native understory plants
- *Character:* Dense forest and gray skies to the ocean, estuary environment and islands along the river, then waves and whitecaps of the surf
- *Climate:* Very wet, rainy, coastal storms
- *Colors:* Green, gray
- *Animals:* Salmon, seal, abundant waterfowl including: ducks, geese, brant, cranes, gulls, swans, cormorants, and others, California condor, whale, Columbia white-tailed deer, abundant sea life

This region was predominantly occupied by Chinookan families, including the Cathlapotle, Wahkiakums, Chinook, and Clatsop Tribes, with a few Salishan Chehalis (Clark called Chiltz) and Cowlitz. Some of the impressions derived from the cultures of this region include:

- *Architecture:* Cedar plank houses, raised burial structures, carved canoes and other wood carvings
- *Clothing and other items:* Hats, clothing, and baskets woven from cedar, maritime trade influences
- *Food:* Salmon, shellfish, elk, berries, and wappato roots

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Suggested Interpretive Topics

General Topics and Potential “Binding Threads”

If we think of the potential network of interpretive exhibits that will exist along the Lewis and Clark Trail in Washington as a “string of pearls,” there should be elements of consistency and continuity in the interpretation that act as “binding threads” tying the “pearls” of interpretation together statewide.

In addition to the aesthetic imagery that can be used to provide continuity throughout the interpretive system as discussed previously in this chapter, the approach to interpretive subject matter can also bring continuity. Some ideas include:

- *Documenting Science and Nature*

The identification of plants and wildlife along the journey; cataloguing of specimens; natural conditions along the route such as geology, vegetation, climate, etc. The journals of the Corps of Discovery provided a wealth of scientific information about the West and Clark’s skilled cartography provided some of the first graphic depictions of this part of the country.

- *Time and Place*

Displaying elements of interpretation that show the chronological events of the Expedition relative to the time and place of the visitor, such as a timeline and/or milepost markers on the land and in the water.

- *Water*

Long portions of the Expedition were traveled by rivers in the quest to reach the Pacific Ocean and establish a principal trade route across the country. Water and water travel, including the different types of water craft used on the journey, the hierarchy of the rivers traveled, the differences between going upstream and downstream, experiences with rapids and falls on the Snake and Columbia Rivers, and portages around difficult segments are all examples of water-related elements that could be interpreted across Washington.



Clark's Map of Cape Disappointment

- *Journey*

The concept of the “journey” as a life experience; modern day travel as a journey relating to historic travel of these routes by Native Americans, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and other explorers and settlers.

- *Navigation*

The Corps of Discovery used various methods to chart their course and navigate their way through the journey, including techniques involving astronomical observations and surveying measurements that were state-of-the-art at the time.

- *Members of the Party*

At various points along the journey, journal excerpts describe important traits of various members of the party, including Sacagawea, Charbonneau, Drouilliard, Cruzatte, York, the Fields brothers, and others. A string of interpretive exhibits could contain a small subject area that is dedicated to a different member of the party at each location relevant to journal

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descriptions of that person that occurred in that vicinity (i.e. Clark's mention of Sacagawea as a symbol of peaceful intentions of the Expedition after entering the Columbia River on October 19, 1805: "...the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter...") Members of the party who are not as well known might be of particular interest.

- *Encounters with Tribes*

Interpretation of Native American culture should be provided as a consistent element throughout Washington in context with the tribes of the specific region. The stories of how tribes helped the Corps of Discovery along their journey can be told continuously across Washington.

- *Risk Taking and Adventure*

Countless journal entries from travels down the wild Snake and Columbia Rivers tell of the repeated risks taken in running the rapids. Clark's journal entry of October 14th, 1805 describes this episode on the Snake River: "...at 12 miles we Came too at the head of a rapid which the Indians told me was verry bad, we viewed the rapid found it bad in decending three Stern Canoes Stuk fast for Some time on the head of the rapid and one Struk a rock in the worst part, fortunately all landed Safe below the rapid which was nearly 3 miles in length."

William Clark, October 24, 1805 at the Short Narrows: "...in those narrows the water was agitated in a most Shocking manner boils Swell & whorl pools, we passed with great risque It being impossible to make a portage of the Canoes,

about 2 miles lower passed a verry Bad place between 2 rocks one large & in the middle of the river here our Canoes took in Some water, I put all the men who Could not Swim on Shore..."

- *Leadership, Teamwork, and Friendship*

The Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of the most successful explorations that has ever occurred. The success of the journey is credited to the strong leadership of the captains, their friendship for one-another, and the teamwork they inspired among their corps, as well as their respect for many tribes in appreciation of their help to the Corps.

- *Expansion of the West and Commerce/Trade*

A principal objective of the Expedition was to establish a route for commerce across the United States, ultimately leading to westward expansion by Euro-Americans and forever changing the landscape and the cultures of the people who were here before.

- *Multi-Culturalism/Diversity of the Party*

The make-up of the Corps of Discovery was diverse: Euro-Americans, Native Americans, French and French-Canadians, a child, a woman, an African American, Cruzatte, the fiddler, who was sighted in only one eye, and the ages of its members from eight months to forty years. The diversity of the party and their encounters with diverse native cultures along the journey can be interpreted. In keeping with the element of diversity, interpretation should reach a broad, diverse audience, with illustrations and text that can be appreciated by people of all ages and cultures.

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Specific Topics and Example Themes

For Lewis and Clark interpretive exhibits, the following general topics and example themes relate to specific sites in Washington:

- Native American (example theme: Without the help of the Nez Perce, you may never have heard of the Corps of Discovery.)
- Flora and Fauna (example theme: When Lewis and Clark were here, the Columbia River was crowded with salmon and the river was clear.)
- Corps of Discovery Order (example theme: The first “vote” by a woman and an African American in the West happened here.)
- Geography/Mapping (example theme: Clark didn’t need a satellite to see from space to discern the landscape.)
- Tools/Artifacts/Possessions (example theme: Blue beads were so valuable, without them, the Corps of Discovery may have never finished their expedition.)
- Speed of the Journey (example theme: Traveling 30 miles a day downstream in a dugout canoe left little time to pause and take in the scenery.) Interpretation would go on to suggest that modern-day visitors have an opportunity to “savor their time in Washington” and to pause and appreciate some of the things the Corps of Discovery didn’t get a chance to.
- Back on the Map (example theme: By the time the Corps of Discovery reached the point where they could see the peaks of the Cascade Mountains, they knew they were “back on the map.”) Interpretation would tell the story of Lewis and Clark carrying George Vancouver’s maps with them from his explorations at the west coast and mapping of the Cascades.
- What was it they saw, smelled, and heard? (example theme: Class V rapids in a hollow log! It is possible to run rapids that are “Gut swelling, boiling, & whirling in every direction,” in a dugout canoe.)
[Journal Quote by William Clark, on the Columbia River in October 1805]
- Significant Events (example theme: Ocean in View? O! The joy? It’s hard to tell where the river stops and the ocean begins!)
- Then versus Now (example theme: This trail where the Corps of Discovery traveled overland, was once the busiest road in Washington.)
- Diverse Landscape and Climate in Washington (example theme: From prickly pear cactus to grand-daddy sized Douglas firs, the climate and landscape of Washington changes dramatically from east to west.)



Coastal forest environment of Cape Disappointment, Fort Canby State Park